HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative

Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities

Cultivating Vital, High Opportunity Places



Greater Kansas City, MO: Creating Sustainable Places

Sustainability in the Heartland

A new hub of innovation is brewing in the Heartland, where Greater Kansas City is adapting sustainability principles to meet their long-term needs. Here, sustainability signifies sustained and coordinated economic growth.

The Kansas City Metropolitan Area has long had a need for coordinated economic development. The region's class divides are stark. High concentrations of poverty, unemployment, and vacant properties predominate in the same neighborhoods where they did in the 1950s. This lack of coordination is not just at the neighborhood level. With adjacent urban centers along their border line, the states of Kansas and Missouri often find themselves clashing for corporate relocations and recruitments.

Local leaders sought a tool for thinking holistically about economic growth, in which neighborhoods and localities are partners, not adversaries. With support from a HUD Regional Planning grant, <u>Creating Sustainable Places</u> will serve that role, illustrating that going green can be an enhanced mechanism for coordinating and growing regional economies. In the words of Kansas City Councilmember Jan Marcason:

"Creating Sustainable Places has provided the region with an opportunity to work together to discuss how we can encourage more sustainable development. A region of vibrant, green, connected places fosters an innovative economy."

Widespread Prosperity

To create this region of vibrant, green, connected places, the Kansas City team identified six corridors that will serve as demonstration projects for Creating Sustainable Places. Dispersed throughout the Kansas City Metropolitan Area, the sites will be the focus of extensive redevelopment projects. Initial estimates project that successful implementation of Creating Sustainable Places could attract up to 109,561 jobs to the corridors by 2040.

Description

Thinking regionally, the Mid-America Regional Council is leading the Kansas City team as it creates a unified vision for sustainable development reliant upon best practices and demonstration projects from across the bi-state metropolitan area. Kansas City will also create a set of zoning and building codes for its first suburbs that address issues like housing, natural resource protection, public space, and community health.

Grants

- 2010 HUD Regional Planning grant: \$4,250,000
- 2011 HUD Community Challenge grant: \$403,432

Partner Commitments

- Kansas City Public Television: \$300,000
- Metropolitan Arts Council: \$74,824
- The following partners have offered in-kind support: City of Kansas City; City of Lee Summit, and City of Raytown.

Local Partners

First Suburbs Coalition, Hispanic Civic Engagement Project, Home Builders Association, BikeWalk KC, University of Missouri-Kansas City, KC Healthy Kids, Metropolitan Energy Center, Local Initiative Support Corporation, NeighborWorks America, and others.

Achievements

- The Kansas City team has amassed a broad coalition of local governments representing over 90 percent of Greater Kansas City's population, the business and development community, universities, housing organizations, equity organizations, and nonprofits.
- The Make it Right Foundation is using \$14 million in tax credits and donations to redevelop a vacant school in the Green Impact Zone into 50 affordable housing units. The project is scheduled to break ground in August 2012.
- In order to measure their progress, the region is creating a comprehensive series of quantitative economy, equity, and environment indicators.

For more information visit:

http://www.marc.org/sustainableplaces/hud.gov/sustainability





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These projects are steeped in local realities. Along Troost Avenue, decades of disinvestment have left the surrounding communities with little access to regional opportunities. Building off of the gains from the nationally acclaimed Green Impact Zone redevelopment initiative, Creating Sustainable Places will create plans that leverage the neighborhood's new bus rapid transit system into sustained growth. On the U.S. Route 40 corridor, outer ring suburbs are blossoming, while aging and underperforming retail, industrial, and residential properties in the area's inner ring suburbs are struggling to survive. To ensure communities throughout the corridor can thrive, the Kansas City team will tackle these challenges head on with market assessments, concept plans, and financial analyses.

From Planning to Action

Anchored by both community engagement and rigorous economic analysis, Creating Sustainable Places is poised to turn the region's visions into a reality. The project has a large coordinating committee featuring universities, nonprofits, and professional organizations, as well as local governments and the business and development community, which are bringing the region together. This substantial public commentary is coupled with market-sensitive plans, ensuring communities can actualize their goals. Jim Harpool, a developer with local commercial development firm MD Management, believes it is this balance that ensures the plan's success. He says,

"As a developer, what I appreciate

about the Creating Sustainable Places initiative is that it is focused not just on attractive plans, but making sure those attractive plans are economically feasible. The initiative is helping to create tools that developers and planners can use to assess the economic feasibility of proposed projects."

Working closely with HUD, Greater Kansas City is moving quickly from planning to implementation. To catalyze their progress, HUD gave Kansas City a second, smaller grant. Their 2011 Community Challenge award will update zoning and building codes in Kansas City's first suburbs, aligning their development policies with their vision of a sustainable region. Instead of functioning as a one size fits all model, Kansas City's codes will work as a menu, offering localities information on key issues like housing affordability and natural resource protection, weighing their pros and cons, and providing code citations to best practices from across the county. Suburbs in the region will then be able to decide what is best for their unique needs. With limited resources and expertise, Kansas City's first suburbs have struggled to enact their sustainability goals. HUD assistance will build capacity among local leaders, allowing them to shape their cities for the better, replacing rhetoric with results.

Backed by their partners at HUD and bolstered by a coalition of engaged, local stakeholders, the Kansas City Metropolitan Area has the tools necessary to promote a sustainable, thriving region.

THE HUD SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE IN MISSOURI

With an investment of nearly \$10,000,000, the HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative has been active throughout the Show-Me State, building capacity for sustainable development, bringing together diverse stakeholders, and generating economic recovery. Not unlike the Kansas City region, the St. Louis Metropolitan Area struggled with working across jurisdictional boundaries to solve regional problems like housing affordability and transportation. With assistance from a 2010 HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grant, St. Louis has identified 25 Community Planning Areas, grouped by shared characteristics not arbitrary boundaries, which are now collaborating for their mutual prosperity.

In the Cities of Warrensburg and University City, HUD is laying the groundwork for sustainable urban mobility with two Community Challenge grants. Warrensburg is using HUD funding to generate plans for a new network of on-street bike routes and trails that will foster greater connectivity with their light rail system. University City is working on a corridor study for a new local bypass that will include infill housing and mixed-use retail.

